5: Grinnell Q,T-5 (ca.1888) 1962
NF6 Blackfoot NF6

the seeker after power did not always, nor perhaps often, tell any one what he was going to do. 787 785

Three modes of burial were practised by the Blackfeet. They buried their dead on platforms placed in trees, on platforms in lodges, and on the ground in lodges. If a man dies in a lodge, it is never used again. The people would be afraid of the man's ghost. The lodge is often used to wrap the body in, or perhaps the man may be buried in it. 764 [768]

As soon as a person is dead, be it man, woman, or child, the body is immediately prepared for burial, by the nearest female relations. Until recently, the corpse was wrapped in a number of robes, then in a lodge covering, laced with rawhide ropes, and placed on a platform of lodge poles, arranged on the branches of some convenient tree. Some times the outer wrapping — the lodge covering — was omitted. If the deceased was a man, his weapons, and often his medicine, were buried with him. With women a few cooking utensils and implements for tanning robes were placed on the scaffolds. When a man was buried on a platform in a lodge, the platform was usually suspended from the lodge poles.

Sometimes, when a great chief or noted warrior died, his lodge would be moved some little distance from the camp, and set up in a patch of brush. It would be carefully pegged down all around, and stones piled on the edges to make it additionally firm. For still greater security, a rope fastened to the lodge poles, where they come together at the smoke hole, came down, and was securely tied to a peg in the ground in the centre of the lodge, where the fireplace would ordinarily be. Then the beds were made up all around the lodge, and on one of them was placed the corpse, lying as if asleep. The man's weapons, pipe, war clothing, and medicine were placed near him, and the door then closed. No one ever again entered such a lodge. Outside the lodge, a number of his horses, often twenty or more, were killed, so 766 768 [775]

5: Grinnell Q,T-5 (ca.1888) 1962
NF6 Blackfoot NF6

766 768 [775] that he might have plenty to ride on his journey to the Sand Hills, and to use after arriving there. If a man had a favorite horse, he might order it to be killed at his grave, and his order was always carried out. In ancient times, it is said, dogs were killed at the grave.

765 562 Women mourn for deceased relations by cutting their hair short. For the loss of a husband or son (but not a daughter), they not only cut their hair, but often take off one or more joints of their fingers, and always scarify the calves of their legs. Besides this, for a month or so, they daily repair to some place near camp, generally a hill or little rise of ground, and there cry and lament, calling the name of the deceased [533] over and over again. This may be called a chant or song, [152] for there is a certain tune to it. It is in a minor key and very doleful. Any one hearing it for the first time, even though wholly unacquainted with Indian customs, would at once know that it was a mourning song, or at least was the utterance of one in deep distress. There is no fixed period for the length of time one must mourn. Some keep up this daily lament for a few weeks only, and others much longer. I once came across an old wrinkled woman, who was crouched in the sage brush, crying and lamenting for some one, as if her heart would break. On inquiring if any one had lately died, I was told she was mourning for a son she had lost more than twenty years before.

Men mourn by cutting a little of their hair, going without leggings, and for the loss of a son, sometimes scarify their legs. This last, however, is never done for the loss of a wife, daughter, or any relative except a son.

551 [553] Many Blackfeet change their names every season. Whenever a Blackfoot counts a new *coup*, he is entitled to a new name. A Blackfoot will never tell his name if he can avoid it. He believes that if he should speak his name, he would be unfortunate in all his undertakings.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

with a gun. A close relative of the dead man pressed the gun against the horse's head and pulled the trigger. The bodies of the dead horses were left where they fell, but camp members were permitted to strip them of their valuable riding gear. The gear was of no more value to the deceased, for according to Blackfoot belief the spirit horse joined the spirit of its master wearing the trappings it bore at the moment of its death. The death lodge was left undisturbed. People of the dead man's camp feared to loot it lest his spirit return to haunt them.

Prominent chiefs sometimes expressed the desire to have their bodies taken to the fur posts when they died. It was then the responsibility of the fur company to bury them. Maximilian witnessed a double burial of two relatives of Bear Chief by the traders at Fort McKenzie in the summer of 1833.

> The two Indians were laid in the same grave, wrapped in a red blanket and buffalo skin, over which was laid a piece of colored stuff, given by Mr. Mitchell [the chief trader]. The bottom and sides of the grave were lined with boards; the body, too was covered with wood; his bridle, whip, and some other trifles, were thrown in, and the grave filled with earth.[18]

A number of prominent Piegan chiefs who died in the fifties and sixties were taken to Fort Benton for burial.

Women prepared bodies for burial. The deceased were usually dressed in their best clothes, their faces were painted, and the bodies were sewn in buffalo robes and deposited in the forks of trees. Sometimes they were placed on the ground in a ravine or on the summit of a hill, then covered with rocks and dirt to keep the wolves from molesting them. It was customary to kill a man's favorite horse—his trusted companion on the buffalo hunt and war party—near his burial place. Poor families who could not afford to sacrifice the dead man's horse cut its mane and tail short and considered that the animal was in mourning for its master.

[18] *Travels*, II, 141.

9: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1955 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

same way as was the mourning wife who cut the hair of her head. Sometimes the mane and tail of a woman's favorite pack or travois horse were cut after her death. Horses so treated could be used without any period of delay after the owner's death.

Maximilian (1906, vol. 23, p. 121) was told of instances when "twelve or fifteen horses were killed . . . at the funeral of a celebrated chief." However, his mention of 150 horses killed following the death of "Sacomapoh" probably is an exaggeration. Weasel Tail said the greatest number of horses he had seen killed at one burial was 10. The Piegan continued the custom of killing horses as grave escorts until about the year 1895. Among the Canadian Blackfoot the custom was followed sporadically for several years after that date.

Upon the death of an important leader the sacrifice of horses was coupled with an elaborate ceremony of burial in a death lodge. Among the great chiefs honored with death-lodge burial were Lame Bull, first signer of the 1855 treaty with the United States Government (who died in 1858) and Many Horses, the wealthiest Piegan (who died in 1866). Lesser chiefs and prominent warriors received this honorary burial on a less grandiose scale.

When one of these leaders died his lodge was arranged on the inside just as it had been when he was alive, with beds and backrests in place and his favorite equipment displayed as it had been when he used to entertain prominent guests in his lodge. His body was dressed in his finest clothing and laid on a bed in the lodge, or preferably on a pole platform erected in the center of the lodge, built high enough to prevent predatory animals from molesting the body. The body was laid upon the platform with feet facing the doorway (east). Then the deceased's close relatives prepared the horses to be killed, decorating them with elaborate and costly riding gear. The dead man's favorite horse was painted with pictographs representing the owner's coups. That horse's tail was braided and tied in a ball, and a feather pendant was tied in it. His mane was braided and feathers were tied in it also.

Everyone in camp attended the funeral. The horses to be sacrificed were led to the door of the death lodge. Each horse in turn was shot with a gun, pressed against its head and fired by a relative of the deceased. After all the horses were killed the riding gear of the dead man's favorite horse sometimes was stripped off and placed inside the death lodge. At other times the people of the camp were privileged to strip the dead horses of their gear for their own use. Green Grass Bull explained the Blackfoot belief that the spirit of the horse joined that of its owner, wearing the gear it bore at the time it was killed. After the horse's spirit had departed the actual trappings had no more value to the dead Indian than did the carcass of the sacrificed horse itself.

9: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1955 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

766 After the horses were killed in front of the lodge, rocks were piled in lines extending outward from the death lodge in the four cardinal directions. Each pile of rocks represented one of the departed leader's coups. Usually these death lodges were erected in out of the way localities at some distance from camp. Occasionally the lodges were looted by passing enemy war parties. But none of the valuable articles in the death lodge were disturbed by members of his camp for fear the dead man's spirit would haunt them. The bodies of the dead horses were left to decay where they fell.[88]

COMPARATIVE DATA ON HORSES AS GRAVE ESCORTS

171 The literature reveals that the custom of killing horses after the owner's death was followed by other Plains and Plateau Indian tribes. The destruction of horses appears to have been greatest after the death of a wealthy member of a tribe that was relatively rich in horses. Thus over 70 horses were said to have been killed after the death of a leading Kiowa chief (Yarrow, 1881, p. 143). On the other hand, the Plains Cree, notoriously poor in horses, were content to clip the manes and tails of the horses of the deceased (Mandelbaum, 1940, p. 250). Some Central Plains tribes killed the horses by strangling them (Omaha—Fletcher and La Flesche, 1911, p. 83; Kansa—Bushnell, 1927, p. 53; Oto and Missouri—Yarrow, 1881, p. 96). Chiricahua Apache either stabbed or shot the horses (Opler, 1941, p. 474). While the Assiniboin, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Teton Dakota shot them, as did the Blackfoot (Denig, 1930, p. 572; Grinnell, 1923, vol. 2, p. 160; Michelson, 1933, p. 606; Bushnell, 1927, p. 40; Yarrow, 1881, p. 180), most tribes simply left the dead bodies under the burial scaffold or tree, or beside the grave. However, the Coeur d'Alene skinned the dead horses and hung the skins at the grave. If the skins were needed they suspended only the horse's hoofs (Teit, 1930, pp. 173–174). On occasion the Nez Percé skinned and stuffed the horses and set them up as grave monuments (Spinden, 1908, p. 252).

Other tribes reported to have killed horses as grave escorts were the Sarsi (Jenness, 1938, p. 39), Crow (Denig, 1930, p. 479; Lowie, 1912, p. 227), Arapaho (Kroeber, 1902–7, p. 17), Sisseton Dakota (Yarrow, 1881, p. 109), Wichita (ibid., p. 103), Comanche (Neighbors, 1852, vol. 2, p. 133; Yarrow, 1881, p. 99), Wind River and Lemhi Shoshoni (Lowie, 1909, p. 215; 1924 b, p. 282), Bannock (Marquis, 1928, 171 p. 105), and Flathead (Mengarini, 1871–72, p. 82). This custom of the 764 Plains Indians appears to have been an expression of the widespread

[88] Denig (1930, p. 573) wrote that very brave and renowned Assiniboin warriors sometimes requested that their bodies be placed inside their lodges after their death. The-Iron-Arrow-Point, noted chief of the Rock Band of Assiniboin, received a death-lodge burial ante-1850.

Although I feel that everything has a Spirit, and that Spirits are everlasting, I have never particularly believed in "ghosts." I mention them because during my walk home I had an experience that seemed to involve them. This story explains why some of our People don't like to travel at night, especially alone. 123 [484]

For some time, as I walked along, I had the strange feeling I was being followed by something I could not see. I was walking near the edge of the prairie where it drops off to the Bullhorn River below. Suddenly I came to a deep gully that began out on the prairie and opened up into the river bottom. Rather than hike way around it I decided to go straight across, by going down it and then climbing back up. I started to trot downhill when I heard the sound of heavy breathing behind me. My heart grew large in my chest as I came to a quick halt and turned my head to look behind me. I heard one more heavy breath, which sounded as though it had come from something also trying to stop quickly. At that instant there was a thumping sound from behind me, and then a piece of cow dung rolled by and came to rest not far from where I had stopped. I strained my eyes until I was convinced that no person or animal was behind me, and then began singing some of my sacred songs to keep myself company while I continued homeward. The next day I learned from one of the Old People that near this place were several old open graves, and that few people walk past them at night because encounters with ghosts usually result. [775]

There are numerous open graves around the reserve. Most of them are pretty well scattered from the effects of nature. Open graves were usually made by placing a filled coffin or homemade box under a cutbank or next to some large rocks and boulders. Less often, the coffin was covered with a pile of rocks, or placed inside a specially built little cabin. Bodies were usually placed in open graves during epidemics, or by family members who did not believe in burial underground 764 766 [177]

[p. 227-B]

but were prevented by the government from placing the bodies on scaffolds or in trees. 766 [177]

According to tradition, the Spirits of our People go to a place called the Sandhills after the person's body dies. Good, bad, or indifferent as the person was when physically alive, so will the Spirit go on forever in the Sandhills. A deceased person's most cherished possessions were usually placed with the body, so that their Spirits could continue to be together. The same was true of a man's favorite horse. It was often shot by his grave. Favorite horses that were not killed often died of starvation while mourning the loss of their master. 775 [764] [231]

It is thought to take some time for a person's Spirit to leave the body completely and go on to the Sandhills. For that reason, a person would sometimes be brought back from death if he had unusual spiritual powers and had instructed a close friend or relative how to recall them. For the same reason, few people would touch a dead person or go near his burial ground, especially at night. It is said that a dead person's Spirit, or ghost, often tries to persuade others to accompany it. Widows who commit suicide by their husbands' graves are said to have been persuaded to join them on their way to the Sandhills. At the Sandhills it is said that life goes on much like here, only in Spirit. The Old Way of life is the one that goes on, of course. [761] [762]

Some of our People have slept by old graves in search of Power from the Spirits who may be there. I was once inspired to seek such Power. In my dream I was visited by a skeleton-man in a 769 787 123

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 228-A]
[p. 228-A]

764 had died there, but the body would not be left there."

It is possible that these two distinct lines of thought are the result of Blackfoot mortuary customs. At times, particularly during plagues or when moving camp, a dead person was left in his sewn-up lodge. On other occasions, he was buried in the trees or on a scaffolding on a high hill. This variation possibly affected the use of the "medicine wheel," with the radiating lines being left at the death lodge if it was used, or at the tipi ring if the chief was buried elsewhere.

The Bloods and North Blackfoot know of several "medicine wheels" which were erected for warrior chiefs. Some of these markers are still in existence, but most have been destroyed by the inroads of civilization. One Gun knew of two wheels which he claimed were intact on the North Blackfoot Reserve, east of Calgary. He said that "at Blackfoot Crossing there is one for Little Medicine Pipe, a Blackfoot who died in the smallpox epidemic of 1869–70, and on Arrowwood Creek is one for Bad Head, a Blood chief." Another informant said that Many Spotted Horses, a noted Blood war chief who died in 1884, had a "medicine wheel" on the Blood Reserve near Whoop-

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